

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 14127

SECDEF FOR ASD: ISA; CINCEUR FOR ECJ4/7-SA.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAUGS: MARR, MASS, US, LE

SUBJ: FY 1976 MILITARY SECURITY

REF:A. JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MSG 258224/DTG 310125Z OCT 75.

THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE KEYED TO PARA 5 OF REFTEL:

A. WE BELIEVE THAT GOL WILL WELCOME THE OFFER OF THE \$5 MILLION CREDIT AGREEMENT AND WILL MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO CONSUMMATE IT. HOWEVER, WE HAVE YET TO SEE GOL COMPLETE ALL REPEAT ALL OF THE LEGAL PROCEDURES PRESCRIBED BY THE LEBANESE CONSTITUTION FOR APPROVAL OF SUCH AGREEMENTS. IN MAY 75, THE SECRETARY OF THE MILITARY PURCHASING COMMISSION OF THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF) TOLD US THAT PROCEDURES WERE BEING ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TO EXPEDITE THE HANDLING OF ANY FUTURE OFFERS OF CREDIT FROM USG. IN VIEW OF GOL'S CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. WE ARE DUBIOUS OF ITS ABILITY TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY LEGISLATIVE ACTION ON A TIMELY BASIS. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THE OFFER OF CREDIT SHOULD BE EXTENDED.

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B. MAJOR ITEMS TO BE PROCURED ARE TWO MILLION DOLLARS

IN COMMAND AND CONTROL EQUIPMENT (PRIMARILY RADIOS); ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN SMALL ARMS (M-16A) RIFLES AND M-60 MG); AND TWO MILLION DOLLARS IN OTHER ARTICLES AND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT. ASSUMING PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED NATIONAL CONSCRIPTION LAW, THE LAF WILL SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE IN SIZE. US RADIOS AND SMALL ARMS WILL BE NEEDED TO SUPPORT THIS INCREASE. OTHER ARTICLES AND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED AS NEW UNITS ARE ACTIVATED.

C. PROVISION OF CREDIT SUPPORTS A MILITARY REQUIREMENT IN THAT ALL ARMS/EQUIPMENT THAT WOULD BE PROCURED UNDER A CREDIT AGREEMENT ARE ORIENTED TOWARD INTERNAL SECURITY.

D. WE ARE AWARE OF NO OTHER MILITARY JUSTIFICATION FOR EXTENSION OF CREDIT.

E. GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON IS LIMITED TO TRAINING. THE ONLY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRANT TRAINING AND THE CREDIT PROGRAM IS THAT A PORTION OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM IS ALLOCATED TO PROVIDING OPERATOR AND MAINTENANCE SKILLS FOR EQUIPMENT PROCURED UNDER FMS CREDIT.

F. US SECURITY ASSISTANCE OBJECTIVES FOR LEBANON ARE:
(1) TO PROMOTE FAVORABLE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH LEBANON TO MAINTAIN A PRO-WEST ORIENTATION, PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE LAF; AND (2) TO ASSIST LEBANON IN IMPROVING ITS DEFENSE CAPABILITIES, WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE INTERNAL SECURITY MISSION. BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED RELATIVE COMBAT POWER OF THE LEBANESE LEFT AND SUPPORTING PALESTINIAN FORCES, THE LAF IS NO LONGER CONSIDERED CAPABLE OF ASSURING INTERNAL SECURITY. LAF NEEDS A SOURCE OF MODERN EQUIPMENT TO REDRESS THAT IMBALANCE. PROVISION OF CREDIT WOULD REASSURE GOL OF CONTINUED US SUPPORT (WHETHER OR NOT LEBANESE PARLIAMENT ULTIMATELY PERMITTED LAF TO ACCEPT IT). OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE IS THE FACT THAT THE LAF HAS BEEN STRONGLY CRITICIZED FOR THE ALLEGED PRO-CHRISTIAN PARTIALITY OF ITS OFFICER CORPS. THIS SITUATION, COMBINED WITH THE FACT THAT THE LAF HAS A NEW CG, STRONGLY MILITATES FOR THE PROVISION OF CREDIT TO AVOID RAISING ANY POSSIBLE QUESTION OF CONFIDENTIAL

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LACK OF USG CONFIDENCE IN NEW GOL/LAF LEADERSHIP.

G. A CREDIT AGREEMENT WILL NOT AFFECT REGIONAL ARMS BALANCE OR CONTRIBUTE TO AN ARMS RACE AS LAF IS GROSSLY INFERIOR IN SIZE AND STRENGTH TO ARMED FORCES OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.

H. GOL HAS RECEIVED A FEW ARMS AND HAS BEEN PROMISED

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR ARMS FROM ARAB LEAGUE COUNTRIES. WE ARE UNABLE AT THIS TIME TO ASSESS TO WHAT EXTENT THIS ASSISTANCE WILL ALLOW GOL TO OBTAIN EQUIPMENT SOLELY ON A CASH BASIS. FUTURE ARAB ASSISTANCE MAY BE DEVOTED TO REBUILDING ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE WITH LITTLE OR NO ASSISTANCE FOR MILITARY PROCUREMENT.

I. IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE THE FULL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF FOUR PLUS ROUNDS OF CIVIL STRIFE CAN BE FULLY ASSESSED. IF OUTSIDE AID FROM WEALTHY ARAB STATES IS NOT FORTHCOMING, THE DEFENSE BUDGET MIGHT THEN ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTIES. IF THIS OCCURS, WE COULD CONCEIVABLY RECEIVE FURTHER REQUESTS FROM GOL FOR GRANT AID. HOWEVER, REPAYMENT OF \$5 MILLION CREDIT WILL NOT IN ITSELF PLACE HEAVY OR UNDESIRABLE BURDEN ON COUNTRY'S RESOURCES.

J. WE HAVE HEARD UNOFFICIALLY THAT LAF IS NEGOTIATING FOR THE PURCHASE OF SOME MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM BRITAIN, SPAIN AND FRANCE. HOWEVER, AS THESE TYPES OF EQUIPMENT ARE NOT AVAILABLE FROM US SOURCES, IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE RELEVANT TO THE EXTENSION OF PROPOSED FY 1976 CREDIT. AS FOR AS US PROCUREMENT IS CONCERNED, THE LOAN MIGHT ENABLE THE LAF TO BUY SOME ITEMS THAT THEY MIGHT OTHERWISE HAVE TO WAIT LONGER FOR: E.G., INCREASED GROUND MOBILITY CAPABILITY IN THE FORM OF TWO AND ONE HALF TON TRUCKS, CURRENTLY SCHEDULED FOR FY 77 PROCUREMENT. LAF CAPABILITY IN THIS AREA WAS STRAINED DURING PREVIOUS ROUNDS WHEN THEY WERE TIED UP WITH PROVIDING ARMED CONVOYS FOR OIL/GAS TANKERS AND THE LIKE.

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